

Hypertension (high blood pressure) Overview

This infoKID topic is for parents and carers about children's kidney conditions.

This leaflet has the overview only.

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Hypertension is blood pressure that is too high. In some children, hypertension can be a serious condition. It can increase the risk of getting other diseases, especially if the hypertension continues into their adult years.

Hypertension in children is rare. If your child has hypertension, your doctor will try to find out what is causing it and if it is affecting other parts of his or her body, such as the kidneys or heart.

This information covers:

- what hypertension is and why it is important
- symptoms of hypertension
- what may cause hypertension
- how your doctor can find out if your child has hypertension
- any treatment or lifestyle changes that your child may need
- monitoring hypertension
- long-term effects of hypertension.



About blood pressure

Blood pressure is the force, or pressure, caused mainly by the heart pumping, that makes the blood flow round the body. It is important that blood pressure is in a healthy range – not too high and not too low.

The kidneys normally control blood pressure to help make sure it is at a healthy level. They do this by regulating how much salt and water is in the blood. If the kidneys are not working properly, they may not be able to control blood pressure well.

Symptoms

Hypertension can be mild, moderate or severe. Often, there are no early symptoms or signs in hypertension. Some children with hypertension have the following:

- headaches that keep coming back or that do not go away
- vomiting (being sick), especially with a headache
- blurred (fuzzy) vision
- odd feelings/numbness

- poor coordination, or movement disorders – they may seem clumsy
- temporary weakness or paralysis (difficulty moving) of one side of the face
- seizures (which may also be called fits or convulsions).

→ If your child has any of the above, take them to your doctor to check their blood pressure as soon as possible.

Causes

Hypertension in children is rare. It is much more common in adults, especially older adults.

In children it is often caused by an underlying health condition.

Tests and diagnosis

Your child's doctor or nurse will measure your child's blood pressure a few times before **diagnosing** (identifying) hypertension. Your doctor or nurse will know the healthy range of blood pressure for your child.

Treatment

If your child continues to have hypertension after careful assessment and monitoring, he or she will need to control their blood pressure.

Eating a healthy diet with no added salt and getting plenty of exercise can help to reduce blood pressure. Some children need to take medicines.

About the future

Hypertension can be a serious condition **if it is not well controlled**. Hypertension increases the risk of other diseases, especially if it continues into adulthood. These include stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney disease.

If your child continues to have hypertension, his or her blood pressure will need to be carefully controlled. If your child has an underlying condition, this may need treatment.

Follow up

Your child may need to go back to your doctor or to the hospital to have more blood pressure measurements, or for other tests or treatment. Your doctor will let you know what to expect.

→ **Contact your doctor straight away if your child is vomiting (being sick) and cannot take their medicine for more than 24 hours (1 day).**

» **More detail on www.infoKID.org.uk**

Your notes and contact information

www.infoKID.org.uk



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For details on any sources of information used in this topic, please contact us through our website www.infoKID.org.uk.

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